

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-38 (canceled)

Please add the following new claims:

39. (new) Food holding apparatus for holding pre-cooked food at a selected holding temperature, said apparatus comprising:

a cabinet having a plurality of holding compartments for holding said pre-cooked food therein;

a heat source in each compartment of said plurality of compartments for delivering heat to the food in the compartment; and

a control mechanism programmed to vary the heat delivered by each heat source to the food in a respective holding compartment through a duration of holding time, said duration comprising a first phase during which the heat source operates at a first level and the food reaches said selected holding temperature, a second phase during which the heat source operates at a second level different from said first level to hold the food at said selected holding temperature, and a third phase at which the heat source operates at a third level different from said first and second levels to maintain the food at said selected holding temperature.

40. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said second level is less than said first level and said third level is greater than said second level but less than said first level.

41. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 40 wherein said second level is 0% of a maximum power level of said heat source.

42. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 40 wherein said heat source is located in a bottom wall of a respective holding compartment of said plurality of compartments.

43. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 41 wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises opposite side walls which are not heated.

44. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 43 wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises a top wall which is not heated.

45. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said second level is greater than said first level and said third level is less than said second level but greater than said first level.

46. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said first level is 0% of a maximum power level of heat source.

47. (new) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 46 wherein said heat source is located adjacent a top wall of a respective holding compartment of said plurality of compartments for emitting radiant heat down on said food.

48. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising a vertical partition in the cabinet dividing the cabinet into a plurality of separate side-by-side compartments, and wherein said control mechanism is programmed for controlling operation of the heat sources independent of one another whereby the temperature in each compartment of said plurality of compartments may be independently controlled.

49. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism comprises an operator display device for counting down a time remaining in said duration of holding time.

50. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism comprises at least one sensor in each holding compartment of said plurality of compartments for detecting a

characteristic indicative of the temperature of the food in the compartment, the control mechanism being responsive to signals from said sensor to vary the amount of heat delivered by a respective heat source.

51. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 50 wherein said sensor is a temperature sensor for detecting the temperature of a surface in a respective compartment of said plurality of compartments.

52. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 50 wherein said sensor is operable to detect radiant energy emitted by the food in a respective compartment of said plurality of compartments.

53. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein each heat source is operable in successive time-based cycles each comprising a first on-time interval during which the heat source is activated and a second off-time interval during which said heat source is de-activated, and wherein said control mechanism is programmed to vary the amount of heat by changing the ratio of said on-time interval to the sum of said on-time and off-time intervals.

54. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism varies the amount of heat by increasing and decreasing the level of heat delivered by said heat source without deactivating the heat source.

55. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising a cover secured to one or more walls of at least one of the compartments of said plurality of compartments for covering a pan in said at least one compartment to inhibit the escape of moisture from food in the pan.

56. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 55 wherein said cover floats up and down to accommodate pans having different heights placed in said at least one compartment of said plurality of compartments.

57. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein the compartments of said plurality of compartments are arranged side-by-side.

58. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 57 further comprising a plurality of pans for placement in said plurality of compartments, and wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments is sized for receiving only one of said pans per compartment.

59. (new) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising pre-cooked food in each holding compartment of said plurality of holding compartments, said radiant heat source in the holding compartment being spaced above the food a distance less than 30.5 cm for delivering radiant heat to the food.